



**Public Transit Advisory Council
December 15, 2022, 1:00pm – 2:45pm**

Minutes

1:00pm Welcome and Introductions

Michele Boomhower , VTrans Director of Policy, Planning and Intermodal Development will be joining the meeting. Ross MacDonald, Public Transit Program Manager, welcomed all to the meeting.

Quick introduction of new members to the Council. Stephanie Beck, with the Department of Health, to note continued partnership with VTrans on the recovery and job access transportation program. Devon Neary ,newly appointed executive director of the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, and Gwen Zakov, representative from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns.

1:05pm Review and approval of the September 2022 PTAC minutes/record(attached)

September minutes approved without comment or discussion.

1:10pm Operations Update

Tim Bradshaw is negotiating and ironing out the details for the contract with HBSS for the software and scheduling dispatch system. Initial feedback is promising. The HBSS dashboard and user interfaces are far improved.

SEVT is in their phase I pilot and will be launching many micro transit pilots in the coming months. These pilots are critical to understand how micro transit can serve.

Tim Bradshaw conducted a statewide summit on this recovery and job access program.

Ross MacDonald, Dan Currier, Stephanie Reilly and Tim Bradshaw will be approaching all the recovery houses in the state to see if they would like us to do a meeting with their staff, with public transit representation, along with us, to replicate the impressive experience the Morrisville area has had.

Steadman Hill, Steven Falbel and our primary contractor is working with all the providers to take a look at their financials and their cost allocation plans to make sure that transit rates, indirect rates and reporting are all consistent and using the formulas and sheets that have been provided as tools to all of our providers.

We will be approving indirect rates with the FTA before the end of this fiscal year.

COVID relief funds are almost depleted. The remaining dollars will be used to pay for that HBSS scheduling and soft scheduling dispatch software.

New projects, lower revenue projections all being analyzed due to higher gas prices, lower vehicle miles traveled and electrification.

1:20pm FY'22 - National Transit Database and Route Performance Report – Initial Data and Indications

Stephen Falbel presents an overview of the root performance report. Ridership is recovering. Operating costs are increasing. Cost per trip variations explained. Typical patterns, explained in charts, further explain the variations. A final report will come out after Jan.1 and questions will be addressed at that time.

1:35 pm FY'23 Legislative Study – Fare Free Service Assessment

Stephen Falbel explains the legislature requested this as part of the transportation bill this year and they asked for an assessment of what are the impacts of extending a 0 fare policy through fiscal 2024. They wanted to look at ridership trends from FY20 through the first quarter of FY23 and they wanted to look at it by county and by type of service. Then, it was necessary to forecast ridership and revenue impacts. The process for the studies, comparisons and forecasting explained along with factors such as cost of collecting fares vs. revenue from fares.

The impact on Medicaid transportation discussed along with factors in membership.

Questions and discussion post presentation - John Sharrow - How are the number of lost riders estimated if the fares were reactivated?

Stephen Falbel responds -Based on industry standard impacts, 40 years of studies, there is some evidence for what that ridership impacts are likely to be if you do increase fares or if you go from 0 fare to some fare. Some is speculative, but it was all done on a room-by-room basis based on what the ridership currently is and how it is growing.

John Sharrow opened a discussion with Ross MacDonald and Stephen Falbel on “joy riding” or riding for warmth and those impacts on the study, ridership, and costs. The overall thought is that number is too low to affect the numbers.

Lucas Herring - Have we done an analysis to see if federal funds are going be used based on the equity, by county or by area, for payment of a fare free service? Is there any analysis on the funding streams that pay for free ridership?

Stephen Falbel - The answer is, not specifically. The legislature is concerned about distribution across counties. That's why they asked for what those impacts are and we're providing that information.

Rep. Mollie Burke did ask for clarification on the impact of the fare free effect on the Medicaid contract.

Stephen Falbel - The revenue that comes to VPTA for Medicaid is based on the number of members, which is people who receive Medicaid who are enrolled in this program and are eligible for Medicaid transportation. To remain a member, you must use the service at least once in a 52-week period. If there is no fare and people just ride the bus to get to their appointments, then they can just drop off the membership role. That's the problem.

Ross MacDonald concluded the discussion stating we will present this and publish this study through the legislature in the first few weeks of January

1:50pm Community Driver Program Update

Ross MacDonald - Posters along with a media buy are in place.

Media buy will begin on January 9th, and this is going to include broadcasts, connection to our TV, radio, videos and online ads. The government site will be updated. Shift from volunteer to community driver is in place.

2:00pm MTI Projects and Status

Dan Currier - The grant focuses on transportation dependent Vermonters, improving their access, reducing single occupancy vehicles and greenhouse gas reduction.

34 projects awarded just under \$2,000,000.

Just under 4000 total engagements through year one. Year two data will be added at the end of the calendar year.

200 electric bikes were purchased through the program, and we're looking at about 61 tons of CO2 was reduced based on the calculations. Further success of the bike programs discussed.

6 MTI, micro transit grants, and majority of funds went right to the transit providers to help operate micro transit services that will soon be pilots.

Link to the MTI page on VTrans website: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/public-transit/mti>

2:20pm Public Transit Provider Spotlight – TVT

Jim Moulton - Overall description of areas served by TVT and highlights of projects ongoing. Pressures and new realities in terms of fuel prices or the labor market.

Completed feasibility study for converting some of our Middlebury service to micro transit and now in the planning and implementation stages.

The elders and disabled program and Medicaid programs

Partnership with VTrans and grants towards electrical buses

New statewide dispatching software, our procurement staff have taken the lead on developing this project for all of VTA.

Innovation on net zero water and electricity in our facilities is ongoing in development.

2:40pm Member Updates

No member updates

Michele Boomhower; Thank you to the team and for partnerships

2:45pm Adjourn